

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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MARGARET ESHERICK HOUSE

HABS PA-6775

204 Sunrise Lane

Philadelphia

Philadelphia County

Pennsylvania

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James W. Rosenthal, photographer, 2009

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|-----------|---|
| PA-6775-1 | North elevation. This is the principal facade, facing Sunrise Lane. Louis Kahn's T-shaped "keyhole" openings, among his most recognizable design conventions, are strongly evident on this elevation and an early instance of their use.  |
| PA-6775-2 | Perspective view, north elevation, looking east.  |
| PA-6775-3 | Detail view, living room firebox and chimney. As designed, the chimney and wall plane were to be physically linked by tall windows. The decision to allow the chimney to rise fully independent of the wall, in front of a fixed window, was made after the construction drawings were completed. This change resulted in a sophisticated interplay of solidity and transparency.   |
| PA-6775-4 | Environmental view, looking north.  |
| PA-6775-5 | Perspective view, south elevation, looking north. The keyhole openings on the north front, which limited views into the house from the street, were not necessary on the more private garden front. Instead, large expanses of glass and flanking shuttered openings create strong indoor-outdoor links to the terrace, lawn, and Pastorius Park beyond. The brick terrace and curving walls were part of Frederick W. G. Peck's 1963 landscape plan. |

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- PA-6775-6 Carport, looking east. Kahn devised various schemes for a garage or carport at the Esherick House, but the work had never moved beyond the conceptual stages at the time of Margaret Esherick's April 1962 death. The second owners initially sought a design from Kahn for the parking structure, but after many years of delay reluctantly turned to another architect, William Washburn.
- PA-6775-7 Foyer, looking west toward the front door. The generous sized foyer provides direct access to the living room, stair, dining room, and the powder room and first-floor service rooms via the adjacent cloakroom. The built-in shelves are original, Kahn-designed features. The window opening is glazed above the sill and fitted with wood shutters, shown open, below.
- PA-6775-8 Living room, looking southeast towards the back of the house. The stout, rustic oak beam supporting the balcony stands in contrast to the beautifully finished floors, doors, shutters, balustrade, and stair screen, all constructed of apitong, a hardwood native to the Philippines.
- PA-6775-9 Living room, looking northwest towards the front of the house. The shelves are original features and the shutters in the vertical portion of the T-shaped opening are shown open. The chimney is visible through the window in the east wall above the firebox opening.
- PA-6775-10 Dining room, looking southeast. The lower portion of the shuttered openings are shown closed and secured with bars that pivot to open. The construction drawings depict the dining room and foyer as a single space. The addition of the partition wall between the two is one of only a handful of notable changes made during construction.

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- PA-6775-11 Kitchen, looking south. Although it was anticipated that sculptor Wharton Esherick, uncle of Margaret, would execute more of the interior woodwork, for reasons presently unknown his involvement in the finish of the house was limited to the kitchen. The kitchen has a sculptural character that sets it formally apart from the rest of the Kahn-designed house, but the beautifully worked materials—cherry, walnut, poplar, and copper—relate to the wood and metals used elsewhere in the house. The compact U-shaped assemblage of upper and lower cabinets, open shelving, slide out racks, and a copper sink and drain board offered a high level of artistry to one of the principal service areas.
- PA-6775-12 Bedroom, looking southeast. The front third of the spacious bedroom (in the foreground of this view) was planned as a study separated from the bedroom by a custom wood room divider. Kahn produced a design for the divider, but it was not executed at the time of Margaret Esherick's death and never completed.
- PA-6775-13 Bath-sitting area and dressing room, looking southeast. The pull-out bed over the bathtub is a particularly delightful feature of the house. Yukio Madakoro, a Japanese carpenter/woodworker from New York, fabricated the bed and the shoe rack visible at center-right, as well as the stair screen in the living room. The wood shutters are shown open in the middle of the opening to the left of the fireplace and on the bottom of the opening to the right. The remainder of the openings contain fixed glass panels.
- PA-6775-14 Bathroom, looking southeast into the bath-sitting area. The bathroom is located between the bath-sitting area and a large walk-in closet, and also contains a walk-in shower, out of view to the right. The casement window is one of a handful of operable glazed units in the house, all appearing in private or service areas aligned along the west elevation. The vanity top and backsplash is made of alberene, a type of soapstone, which was also used for the two fireplace surrounds and hearths, and the vanity in the first-floor powder room.

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PA-6775-15

Rear doors, second floor, looking southeast out towards the rear garden. Nearly all the interior doors are Kahn-designed and feature traditional construction with true floating panels. These doors open onto a small rear balcony with a custom-made bronze railing. The doors, balcony, and railing are repeated at the front of the house at the other end of the second-floor interior balcony that overlooks the living room. The wood handrail at center was also designed by Kahn.